

Modeling Respect

By [Dr. Pamela Riley](#) for [National SAVE](#)*

Role Modeling Respect

EVERYBODY is somebody's role model...including YOU! What do your words and actions teach other people? Use the following questions for self-reflection to begin evaluating what your words and actions may be telling the kids (and adults!) in your life. Consider how you might be able to make small changes in your life to be an even better role model of self-respect and respect for others.

- Would you want a child you love to grow up having the same level of self-respect that you have? Why or Why Not?
- Do you treat people who have power over you (i.e. your boss) differently than you treat people over whom you have power (i.e. your employees) or than people you do not know personally (i.e. a store clerk)? What might such differences in the way you treat others tell students about the value of individuals?
- What do you do when you hear another adult tell a racist or sexist joke, or use a demeaning phrase to describe a person's race, sexuality, or background? What might a child observing your reaction conclude about your opinions?
- If a child learned about the world only from observing your behaviors, what kinds of people, if any, would that student view as "the other"? Which of your behaviors (becoming nervous, avoiding eye contact, etc.) would tell the student that they should be afraid of some kinds of people?
- Recall a recent encounter you have had with a child and try to think of the encounter from his or her perspective. What did your words, your tone of voice, your behaviors tell the child about his or her value as a person? Did your actions foster his or her self-esteem or might they have made the child feel unimportant?
- For one day (or one week) keep a journal of your emotional responses to other people. Does a co-worker's comment embarrass you? Does seeing a poor woman on the subway make you feel grateful for the blessings in your life? Does your spouse's failure to ask how your day has been make you feel lonely? Once you've logged your own emotional responses to others, switch roles. Record encounters you have with other people and ask yourself to reflect on how your actions might be making them feel. Use the added awareness of how we all impact each other's self-concept as motivation to role model respectful and loving ways of interacting for the children in your life.

* [How We Hate, Why We Hurt: A Guide for Parents, Educators, and Other Every Day Role Models by Dr. Jody Roy.](#) (2003)